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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a voluntary survey designed to compare responses of adolescents in corrections with adolescents in public schools in 1998. Findings are highlighted in sections entitled: (1) "Youth, Their Families, and Their Environment"; (2) "Psychological Distress"; (3) "Sexual Activity"; (4) "School Perceptions"; and (5) "Antisocial and Illegal Behavior." A comparison of corrections survey results from 1998 and 1995 established very consistent information. Key differences between adolescents in corrections with those in public schools are that most adolescent males and females in corrections facilities grow up in unhealthy environments. They are more likely to have been sexually (females) or physically abused. Many come from single parent homes. They had elevated levels of emotional distress. Their rate of suicide is higher. Antisocial behavior was common, as was substance abuse. On a positive note, adolescents in corrections had very similar responses with respect to their generally positive impressions of interpersonal relationships with family members. Implications of survey results are that early detection and effective intervention, for those traumatized by sexual or physical abuse, is essential. Improved access to assessment and services is recommended. Collaborative efforts within social services, community mental health, and schools is essential. The improvement of these services may reduce recidivism. (Contains 32 references.) (JDM)

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Minnesota Student Survey

Juvenile Correctional Facilities

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MS-1508 (9/99)

Juvenile Correctional Facilities

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The photographs in this publication are from professional stock portfolios and do not represent individuals associated with the juvenile correctional facilities described herein.

Acknowledgments

We would like to recognize the contributions of the many individuals who made this project and subsequent report possible. We are grateful to Mitzi Nelson of the Minnesota Department of Human Services for her persistence and dedicated efforts to collect data from juvenile correctional facilities and detention centers across the state. We appreciate the creative skills of Brenda Carlson of the Minnesota Department of Human Services; her graphic design capabilities are evident throughout the report. Michael Luxenberg and his staff at Professional Data Analysts, Inc. have provided database management and we extend our thanks to them. We appreciate the advice and input of Paula Schaefer of the Minnesota Department of Corrections. We also thank the program staff at participating sites for administering the survey and attending to all the procedural details requested of them. Last, but not least, we extend our sincerest thanks to all of the adolescents who participated in the survey. We appreciate their willingness to complete the long survey and provide us with their view of their world.

Participating Sites

Anoka County Juvenile Detention Center

Arrowhead Regional Juvenile Detention Center

Bar-None Residential Treatment Center

Boys Totem Town

Central Minnesota Regional Detention Center

Chain of Lakes Juvenile Resource Center

Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center

Hennepin County Home School

Many Rivers Regional Juvenile Center

Mille Lacs Academy (Nexus) Inc.

Minnesota Correctional Facility, Red Wing

Minnesota Correctional Facility, Sauk Centre

Northwestern Minnesota Juvenile Center

Pinnacle Programs, Inc.

Prairie Lakes Detention Center

Ramsey County Juvenile Service Center

Red River Valley Residential Program

St. Croix Boys Camp

St. Croix Girls Camp

Thistledew Camp

Valley Lake Boys Home, Inc.

West Central Regional Juvenile Center

Woodland Hills

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Executive Summary

Many adolescent males and females in correctional facilities and detention centers grow up in unhealthy environments that put them at risk for further problems. In a recent survey, compared with students in public schools, adolescents in corrections had rates of familial alcohol and drug abuse that were more than 2 times higher. Other key differences between adolescents in corrections and public school students were rates of physical and sexual abuse. Adolescents in corrections were 2 times more likely than public school students to have been physically abused at home and to have witnessed the physical abuse of other family members. Sexual abuse by a family member was almost 4 times more common among females in corrections and 2½ times more common among males in corrections than among their female and male counterparts in public schools. The family composition between the two populations was also different, with adolescents in corrections more than 2 times as likely to come from single-parent households. On a more positive note, despite differences in family composition, adolescents in corrections had very similar responses to public school students with respect to their generally positive impressions of interpersonal relationships with family members.

Victimization outside of the family was also fairly common among adolescents in corrections, particularly females. Compared to students in public schools, sexual abuse by persons outside the family was 2½ times more common among males and more than 3 times more common among females in corrections. Date rape was nearly 3 times more common and date violence almost 2½ times more common among females in corrections than among females in public schools. Date violence was more than 1½ times more common among males in corrections than among males in public school. Date rape rates, however, were similar among males in corrections and their counterparts in public schools.

Perhaps in response to their experiences, adolescents in corrections acknowledged markedly elevated levels of emotional distress, including pervasive feelings of sadness, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness. Their rate of attempted suicide was 2½ times higher than that for public school students. In fact, almost one-half of the females and one-fifth of the males in corrections said that they had tried to kill themselves at some point in their lives.

Rates of sexual activity were also very high among the adolescents in corrections. Adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times more likely than public school students to report having had sexual intercourse. More than one-quarter of females in juvenile corrections had been pregnant, a rate nearly 7 times higher than that reported by females in public schools. Similarly, males in corrections were 6½ times more likely than males in public schools to report that they had gotten a sexual partner pregnant.

Not surprisingly, antisocial behaviors, including vandalism, physical assaults, and shoplifting, were much more common among adolescents in corrections. These adolescents were also much more likely than public school students to acknowledge being a gang member and carrying guns on school property.

Substance use was extremely common among the juvenile corrections population. Adolescents in corrections were 3 times more likely than public school students to smoke at least a pack of cigarettes a day. They were 3 times more likely to use other people's prescription drugs and sedatives, almost 4 times more likely to use cocaine,

and more than 4 times more likely to use LSD or other hallucinogens. The use of multiple drugs also distinguished the corrections population from the student population. Adolescents in corrections were more than 4 times more likely to use at least 3 drugs than public school students.

Consequences of substance use were reported by a large proportion of adolescents in corrections. Six out of ten adolescents in corrections reported using more than they intended and memory blackouts, indicating impaired control over use. For adolescents who used substances in the past year, the average number of adverse consequences of their substance use was 7.0 compared with 3.2 for public school students.

This report highlights some of the findings that emerged when the Minnesota Student Survey was administered to 1,065 voluntary participants from juvenile correctional facilities in 1998. Males outnumbered females about 4 to 1 in juvenile corrections settings. Adolescents of color were overrepresented in corrections, particularly American Indian and African American youth. In order to get an accurate comparison with other youth, adolescents from correctional facilities were matched with adolescents of the same gender and age randomly selected from the public school student population who had completed the same survey.

The results of the survey of adolescents in corrections have implications for averting juvenile corrections placements. Clearly, earlier detection and effective interventions for children and families traumatized by physical and sexual abuse are essential. Improved access to professional assessments and services, for all families regardless of their financial resources, also would help to reduce the likelihood of serious behavioral problems among youth. Collaborative efforts now underway between county social service agencies, community mental health centers, and schools are an important step in this direction.

Survey results also suggest improvements to services for adolescents in the correctional system that may reduce recidivism and return youth to the community more prepared to cope with the adversities they confront. Specific recommendations include:

- Make substance abuse assessment and treatment available for all juvenile offenders.
- Include assessments of sexual and physical abuse and psychological problems for all juvenile offenders, with mental health care available as needed.
- Include therapeutic services that address the perceived benefits of gang involvement, and develop release plans to incorporate safer and healthier alternatives for meeting adolescent needs for connectedness and physical and emotional safety.
- Include therapeutic services to address responsible sexual behavior.
- Provide referrals for assessments of parental substance abuse problems.
- Ensure that all services for adolescents in corrections are sensitive and responsive to diverse cultural backgrounds and differing developmental needs of males and females.

Preface

Admissions to juvenile correctional facilities

Based on data collected by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and prepared by the Criminal Justice Center at Minnesota Planning, there were 18,591 admissions to the juvenile corrections system in 1997, the last year for which complete data are available. Correctional group foster homes and 24-hour temporary holdover facilities were not included in these admissions.

The number of admissions in a given year is higher than the number of individuals who are detained or incarcerated since a transfer from a detention center to a residential facility is counted as two admissions, and some juveniles have more than one admission to detention centers or residential facilities in the same year. Detention center admissions totaled 13,170 or 71% of the total admissions. Residential facility admissions totaled 5,421 (29% of the total). Males comprised 75% and females 25% of the admissions to detention centers and residential facilities.

Adolescents in correctional facilities are awaiting court action, have been sentenced, or reside in custody services. The length of stay in these programs varies greatly. Most youth in detention centers remain for about two weeks or less. The average length of stay in a residential facility is about five months. Offenses which result in detention or incarceration range from relatively minor offenses such as probation violations up to more serious offenses such as auto theft, burglary, assault, sex offenses, and weapons offenses.

Survey administration

The Minnesota Student Survey was designed to elicit important information about adolescents from adolescents themselves. The survey included a variety of questions about their backgrounds, families, and schools, as well as about their feelings and behaviors. The Minnesota Student Survey was administered to public school students in 1989, 1992, 1995, and 1998 and to adolescents in special settings such as correctional facilities in 1991, 1995, and 1998. Participation in the survey was voluntary and all surveys were completed anonymously.

In 1998, adolescents from 23 juvenile correctional facilities (detention centers and residential facilities) licensed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections participated in the survey. (Correctional group foster homes and 24-hour temporary holdover facilities were not surveyed.) All the facilities were operated by the Minnesota Department of Corrections or by individual counties. Five of the facilities are located in the 7-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area; the others are located throughout the rest of the state. Juvenile corrections survey participation was just as inclusive in 1998 as in 1995 in terms of both participating facilities and number of adolescents. In 1995 937 adolescents from 20 facilities participated.[1]

During the 1998 survey period, 1197 adolescents were detained in correctional facilities. Only 55 adolescents (4.6%) refused to participate in the survey. An additional 21 adolescents (1.8%) were unable to participate due to conflicting activities. Fifty-six surveys (4.7%) were excluded because of inconsistent responses or failure to complete essential items such as gender or age. Of the surveys completed, 1065 (89.9%) were used for analyses in this

report. The high participation rate for the 1998 survey assured that the 1998 sample was reasonably representative of the juvenile corrections population as a whole.

Matching adolescents in corrections with public school students

This report compares the 1998 survey responses of adolescents in corrections with those of adolescents in public schools. Each adolescent in the 1998 corrections survey population was randomly matched by age and gender with a public school student from the 1998 student survey population. This matching procedure ensures that differences found between the two groups are not the result of age or gender differences.

The title of the juvenile correctional facilities sample has been shortened to "Corrections" in many places in this report for ease in reading the text, tables, and graphs. Also for ease of presentation, percentages used in this report have been rounded to whole numbers.

Youth, their families and their environments

Population description

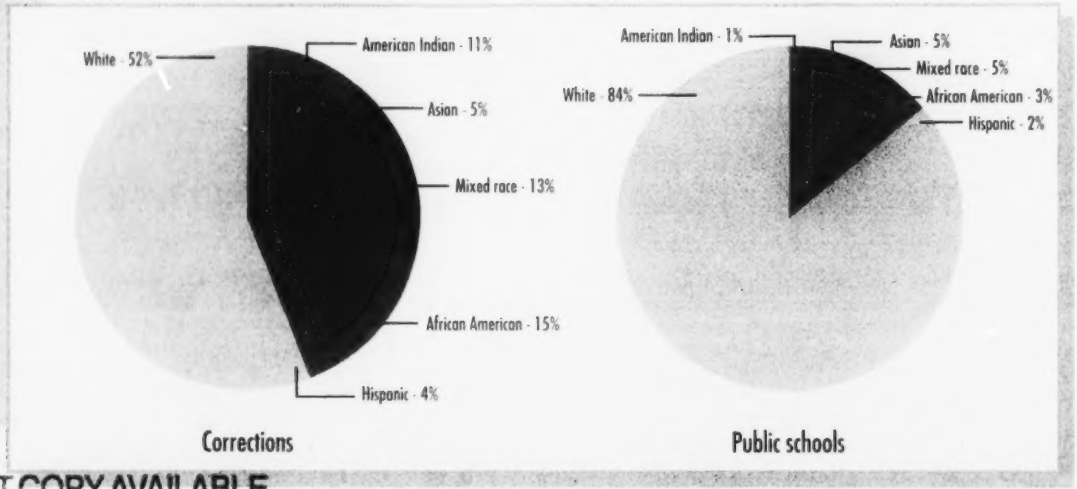
Adolescent males predominated in juvenile correctional settings (81%). Although there were fewer females in corrections, the female adolescents were younger than the males (60% versus 37% younger than 16). Nearly three-fourths (74%) of all adolescents in these settings were 15 to 17 years old, with 17% younger than 15, and 10% aged 18 to 20.

Adolescents of color comprise a disproportionately large proportion of the juvenile corrections population, a finding true for all minority groups except Asian Americans. Placement rates were most elevated for American Indian and African American youth. Females in corrections were almost twice as likely as males to be American Indian or Hispanic.

Demographics of the corrections survey population

	Number	%
Sex		
Females	207	19
Males	858	81
Age		
12	1	<1
13	19	2
14	156	15
15	268	25
16	278	26
17	242	23
18-20	101	10

Racial/ethnic background



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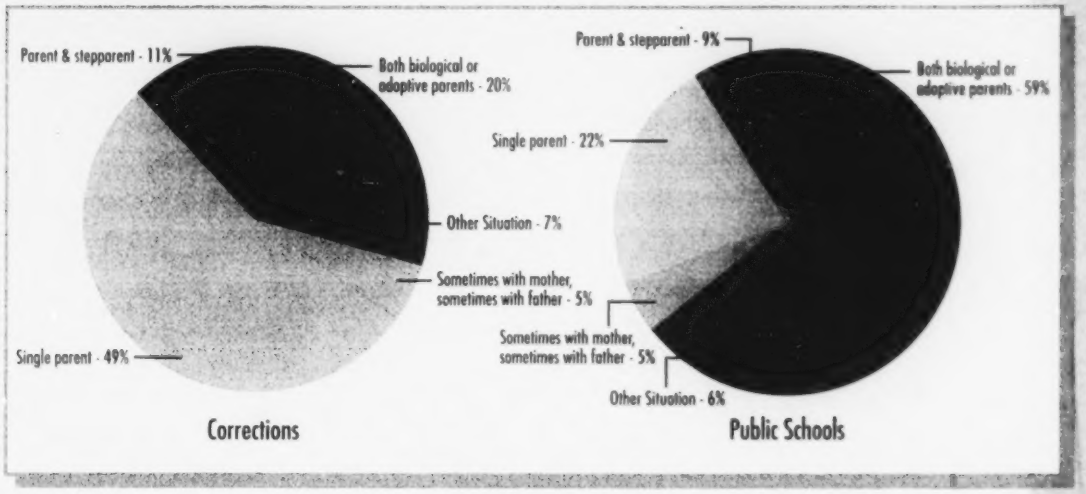
Family composition/relationships

Adolescents in corrections were much less likely to come from two-parent homes than adolescents in the public school population. In fact, students in the public school population were nearly 3 times as likely to be living with both biological or adoptive parents as adolescents in corrections. Adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times as likely as students in public schools to live with single parents.

Living Situation


Parent & stepparent - 11%
Both biological or adoptive parents - 20%
Other Situation - 7%
Sometimes with mother, sometimes with father - 5%
Single parent - 49%
Corrections
Parent & stepparent - 9%
Both biological or adoptive parents - 59%
Single parent - 22%
Sometimes with mother, sometimes with father - 5%
Other Situation - 6%
Public Schools

Perception of family

	Corrections %	Public schools %
How much do you feel...		
(Quite a bit or very much)		
Your parents care about you?	86	86
Your family cares about your feelings?	74	68
Your family understands you?	54	44
Your family respects your privacy?	63	54
Your family has lots of fun together?	49	44

Despite the large differences in family composition between adolescents in corrections and students in public schools, differences in perceptions about interpersonal family relationships were modest. A very large proportion of both groups of adolescents believed that their parents care about them "quite a bit" or "very much." Adolescents in corrections, however, were somewhat more likely than the public school students to give very positive responses to questions about whether their families cared about their feelings, understood them, respected their privacy, or had fun together.

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These comparatively positive assessments of family interactions seem inconsistent with the high rates of family problems reported by adolescents in corrections (and described in the following pages). One possibility is that the parent or other family member who caused serious problems is no longer a member of the household and the adolescent recognizes the strengths of the remaining parent and family members. Another possibility is that, in a dysfunctional environment, the adolescent has abnormal standards of healthy family functioning.

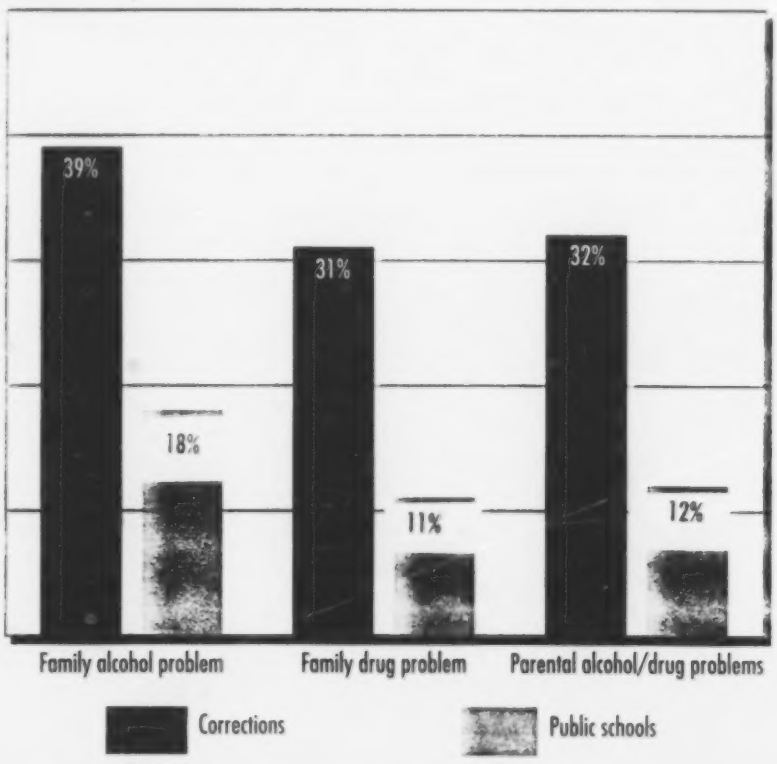
Adolescents in corrections were slightly more likely than their public school counterparts to report positive parent-adolescent communication. A slightly higher percentage of adolescents in corrections than in public schools said they can talk about their problems with their mothers "most of the time" (51% compared with 42%). Adolescents in corrections were as likely as their public school counterparts to report being able to talk to their fathers about their problems "most of the time" (36% compared with 34%). However, adolescents in corrections were 2 times more likely to report that their "mother is not around," and 3 times more likely than adolescents in public schools to report that their "father is not around."

Family alcohol/drug problems

Adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times as likely as public school students to report an alcohol problem in their families, and almost 3 times more likely to report a drug problem in their families. They were asked, "Has alcohol use by any family member repeatedly caused family, health, job, or legal problems?" followed by a similar question for drug use. When the responses for alcohol and drug problems were combined, but limited to adolescent assessment of their parents, the difference was also notable: adolescents in corrections were more than 2½ times as likely as public school students to report that a parent had an alcohol or drug problem.

In the corrections population, parental substance abuse was associated with higher rates of physical and sexual abuse, and severe emotional health problems. In addition, adolescents in corrections who reported having a parent with an alcohol or drug problem were 1½ times more likely than other adolescents in corrections to have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

Family alcohol and other drug problems



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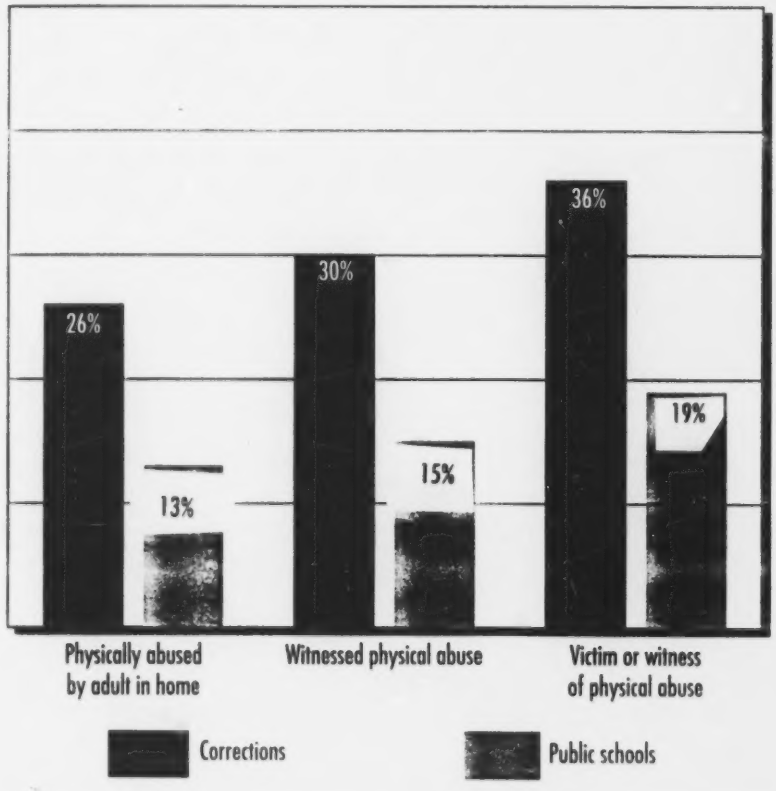
Family violence

The survey included two questions about family violence: "Has any adult in your household ever hit you so hard or so often that you had marks or were afraid of that person?" and "Has anyone in your family ever hit anyone else in the family so hard or so often that they had marks or were afraid of that person?" A "yes" response to the first question was considered physical abuse and a "yes" response to the second question was considered witnessing physical abuse.

Adolescents in corrections were 2 times more likely than public school students to have been physically abused in the home, and to have witnessed other family members being physically abused. Considering both aspects of family violence reveals that more than one-third of adolescents in corrections have either been physically abused, witnessed such abuse, or both.

Family violence was associated with severe emotional health problems and suicide attempts among adolescents in corrections, as well as an increased likelihood of sexual abuse by a non-family member.

Family violence



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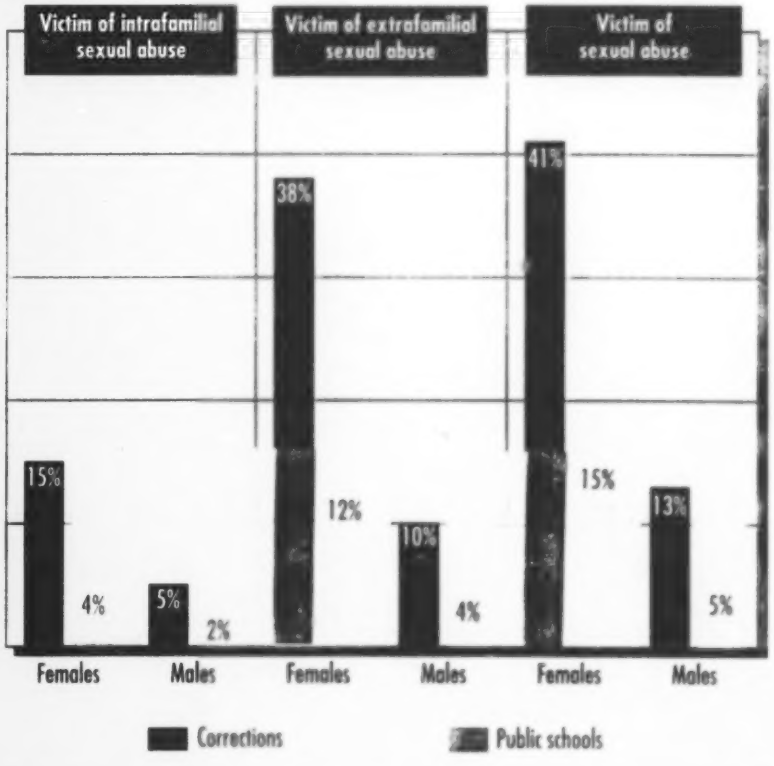
Sexual abuse

Adolescents in corrections were much more likely to report histories of sexual abuse than students in public schools. The survey asked, "Has any older or stronger member of your family ever touched you sexually or had you touch them sexually?" and "Has any adult or older person outside the family ever touched you sexually against your wishes or forced you to touch them sexually?" Intrafamilial (within the family) sexual abuse was almost 4 times more likely to be reported by females in corrections than by females in public schools, and 2½ times more likely to be reported by males in corrections than by males in public schools. Extrafamilial (outside the family) sexual abuse was more than 3 times more likely to be reported by females in corrections than by females in public schools, and 2½ times more likely to be reported by males in corrections than by males in public schools. Considering both types of sexual abuse reveals that four out of ten females in corrections had experienced sexual abuse compared with about one in eight males.

Among adolescents in corrections, a history of sexual abuse was associated with a higher rate of suicide attempts and an increased risk for date rape. In addition, many victims of sexual abuse in the corrections population did not feel that their families cared about them.

Sexual abuse



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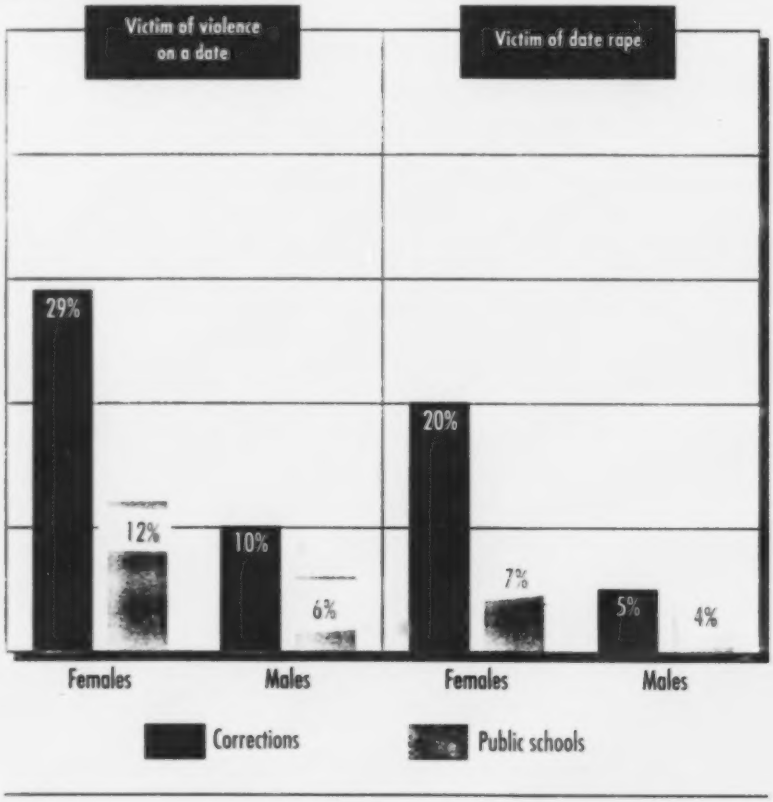
Date violence and date rape

Survey questions also asked about date violence and date rape (which are not included in the definitions of physical and sexual abuse used in this report). The questions asked, "Have you ever been the victim of violence on a date?" and "Have you ever been the victim of date rape?" Females in corrections were much more likely than females in public schools to report date violence (almost 2½ times higher) and date rape (nearly 3 times higher). Males in corrections were more than 1½ times as likely as males in public schools to report being a victim of date violence. However, being a victim of date rape was reported by only a small and equivalent percentage of males in both settings.

Both date violence and date rape were reported much more frequently by females than males in corrections. Many individuals who reported date violence also reported date rape. Date violence and date rape were often associated with low self-esteem, suicide attempts, and multiple drug use among adolescents in corrections.

Date violence and date rape



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Multiple victimizations

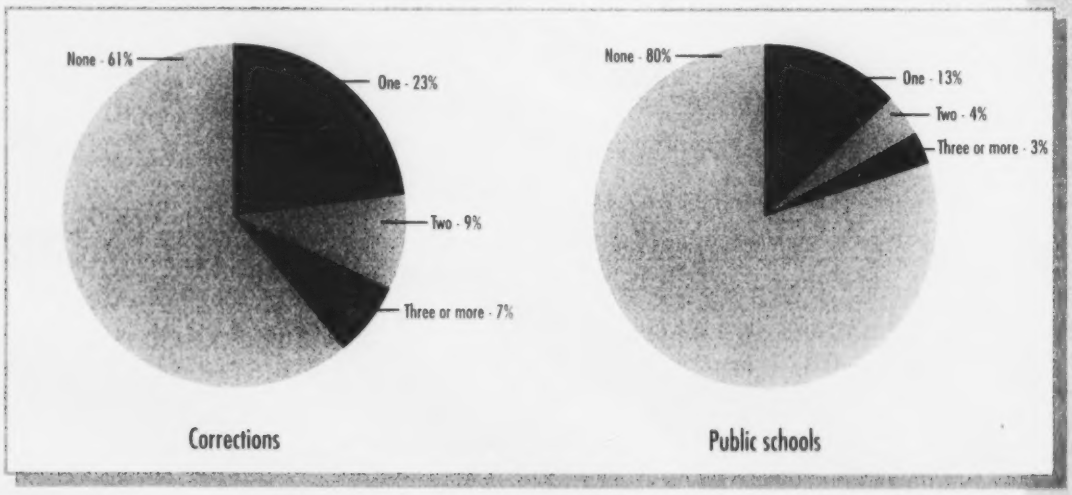
To examine differences in multiple experiences of abuse, five measures of victimization were considered: intrafamilial sexual abuse, extrafamilial sexual abuse, intrafamilial physical abuse, date violence, and date rape. Adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times as likely as public school students to report two or more of these experiences.

Differences between the two survey populations were even more apparent when the threshold was three victimization experiences, and genders were examined separately. While this high level of victimization was reported by only 4% of males in corrections and 2% of males in public schools, 20% of females in corrections had been victimized repeatedly compared with 6% of females in public schools.

Further analyses showed that for adolescents in corrections, a history of physical abuse within the home or having a parent with an alcohol or drug problem was associated with a higher risk of date violence. A history of sexual abuse within or outside the home also was associated with a much higher risk of date violence and date rape. These findings indicate that childhood abuse greatly increases the vulnerability of adolescents to repeated victimization.

Adolescents in the corrections population who were victims of multiple abusive experiences were very vulnerable to other problems as well. These individuals were more likely than non-victims to have severe emotional health and self-esteem problems, and to have attempted suicide. They were also more likely to have a parent with an alcohol or drug problem, and to feel that their family does not care about them. These associations increased with the number of victimization experiences.

Victimization experiences



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Psychological distress

Low self-esteem

For many of the measures of low self-esteem, differences between adolescents in corrections and adolescents in public schools were very small. Adolescents in corrections were somewhat more likely than public school students to feel that they did not have much to be proud of and to sometimes think they are no good. However, they were about as likely as their counterparts in public schools to believe they are unable to do things as well as their peers, to feel they can't do anything right, to be dissatisfied with themselves, to not usually feel good about themselves, and to feel that their lives are not very useful.

Even though only a small percentage of adolescents in corrections had severe self-esteem problems, these individuals were very likely to have been victims of physical abuse and to have attempted suicide. Not surprisingly, these individuals tended to report emotional health problems as well. They were also more likely than adolescents with higher self-esteem to feel that their families did not care about them.

Low self-esteem

	Corrections %	Public schools %
I feel I do not have much to be proud of (Agree)	27	20
Sometimes I think that I am no good (Agree)	29	25
I am able to do things as well as most other people (Disagree)	9	10
I feel like I can't do anything right (Agree)	17	18
On the whole, I'm satisfied with myself (Disagree)	17	15
I usually feel good about myself (Disagree)	15	15
I feel that my life is not very useful (Agree)	19	19

Emotional distress

In contrast to the very small differences in low self-esteem between adolescents in corrections and adolescents in public schools, differences with respect to measures of emotional distress were quite pronounced. The survey asked a variety of questions about mood states for the previous 30-day period. Adolescents in corrections were more likely than their counterparts in public schools to report pervasive feelings of sadness and being nervous or upset during the past 30 days. Adolescents in corrections were also more likely than public school students to report feeling discouraged or hopeless, to be dissatisfied with their personal lives, and to report bad moods and feeling under great stress.

Adolescents in corrections with severe emotional health problems were more likely than those without emotional health problems to have been physically abused, raped by a date, attempted suicide, and be a multiple drug user. Adolescents in corrections with severe emotional health problems were also more likely than those without emotional health problems to have a parent with an alcohol or drug problem, and to feel that their family does not care about them.

Emotional distress

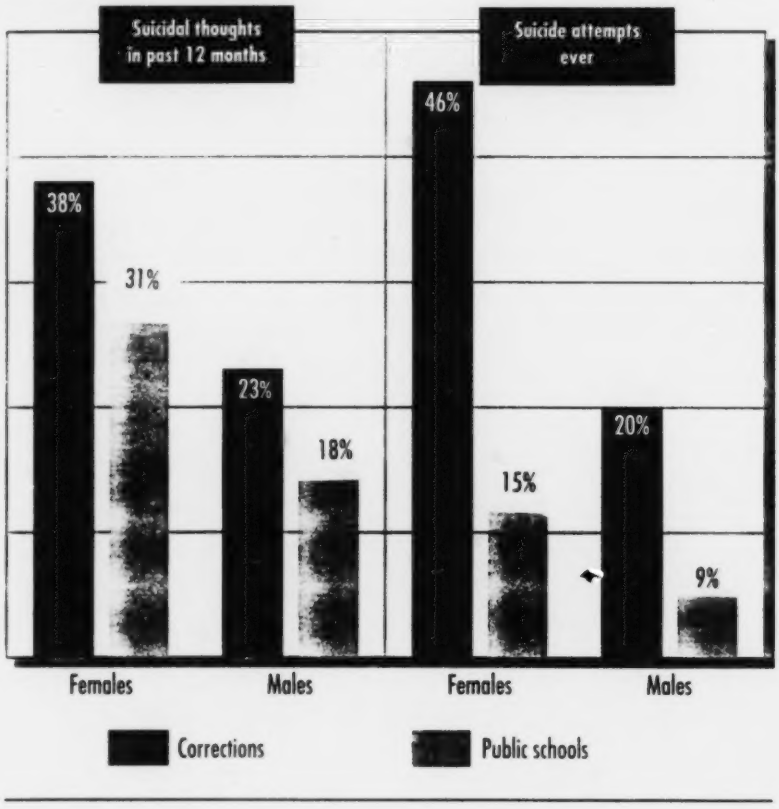
	Corrections %	Public schools %
During the past 30 days...		
Have you felt sad? (All or most of the time)	30	13
Have you felt nervous, worried, or upset? (All or most of the time)	30	15
Have you felt so discouraged or hopeless that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? (Extremely or quite a bit)	25	14
Have you felt satisfied with your personal life? (Somewhat or very dissatisfied)	36	22
How has your mood been? (Bad or very bad)	10	7
Have you felt you were under any stress or pressure? (Quite a bit or almost more than I could take)	45	35

Suicidal behavior

A greater proportion of adolescents in corrections reported suicidal thoughts in the previous 12 months than adolescents in public schools (26% compared with 20%). The proportional difference in lifetime suicide attempts, however, was much greater than for recent suicidal ideation, with 25% of adolescents in corrections and 10% of students in public schools reporting suicide attempts. Females in the corrections population were 3 times more likely than their public school counterparts to report that they had tried to kill themselves and males in corrections were more than 2 times as likely as their public school counterparts. In fact, almost one-half of the females and one-fifth of the males in corrections said they had attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

Not surprisingly, adolescents who reported suicidal ideation had significant emotional health and self-esteem problems, and felt that their families did not care about them. The relatively high rates of suicide attempts observed among adolescents in the corrections population were related to increased rates of physical and sexual abuse, and the regular use of multiple drugs.

Suicidal ideation and attempts



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Sexual activity

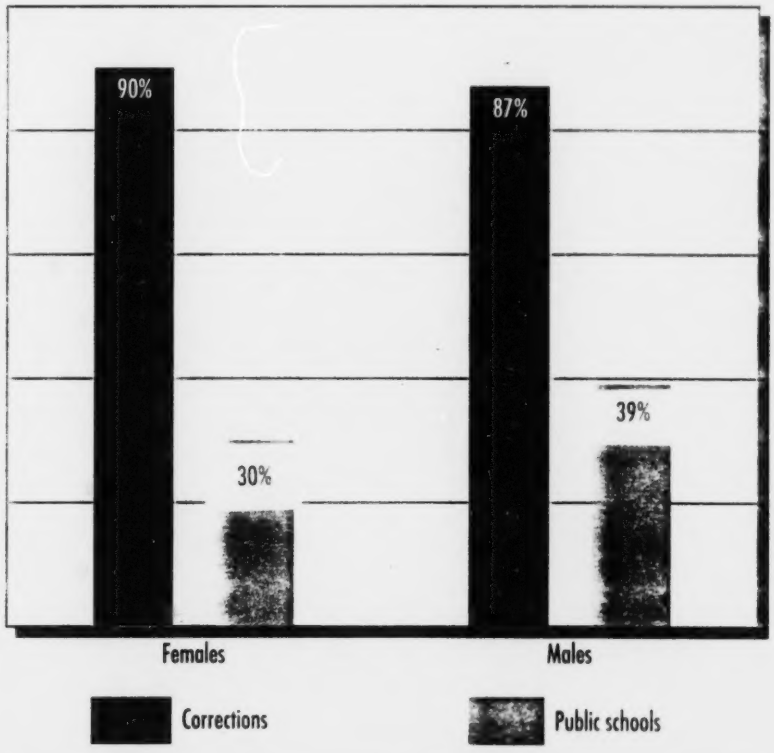
Adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times more likely than students in public school to report having had sexual intercourse. Nine out of ten females and seven out of eight males in corrections said they had had sexual intercourse. In contrast, four out of ten males and three out of ten females in public schools reported having had sexual intercourse.

With respect to the high rates of sexual activity among adolescents in corrections, it is important to remember that such sexual activity may not have been voluntary. It is possible that, for many of the female adolescents, their first sexual experience was coerced since more than one-third of them said they had been sexually abused.

Sexually active adolescents in corrections were much less likely than their counterparts in public schools to report always using a condom (25% compared with 49%). More than half (59%) of the sexually active students from public schools reported condom use the last time they had sexual intercourse compared with 41% of the sexually active adolescents in corrections. Adolescents in corrections were also much less likely to report talking at least once with each sexual partner about preventing pregnancy (34% compared with 52%), and slightly less likely to talk at least once with each partner about sexually transmitted diseases (38% compared with 45%).

The proportion of all females who have been pregnant was nearly 7 times higher in corrections than in public schools (27% compared with 4%). Males in corrections were 6½ times more likely than students in public schools to report that they had gotten a sexual partner pregnant (26% compared with 4%).

Ever had sexual intercourse

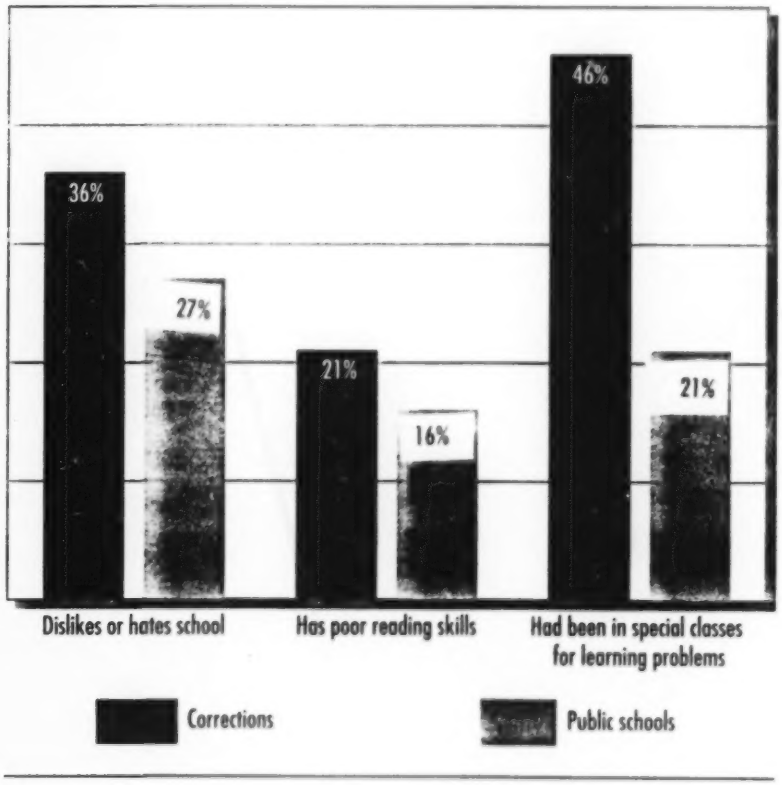


School perceptions and behaviors

Adolescents in corrections were more likely than adolescents in public schools to say that they dislike or hate school. However, most adolescents in both groups said that they planned to finish high school and go on to post-secondary education; only 9% of adolescents in corrections and 4% of adolescents in public schools said that they would like to quit school as soon as they can.

Adolescents in corrections were somewhat more likely than students in public schools to report that their reading skills had prevented them from keeping up with class work. However, the largest difference between the two groups of adolescents was in the proportion reporting that they had been in special classes for learning problems. Compared to adolescents in public schools, more than twice as many adolescents in corrections reported such special class placement.

School factors



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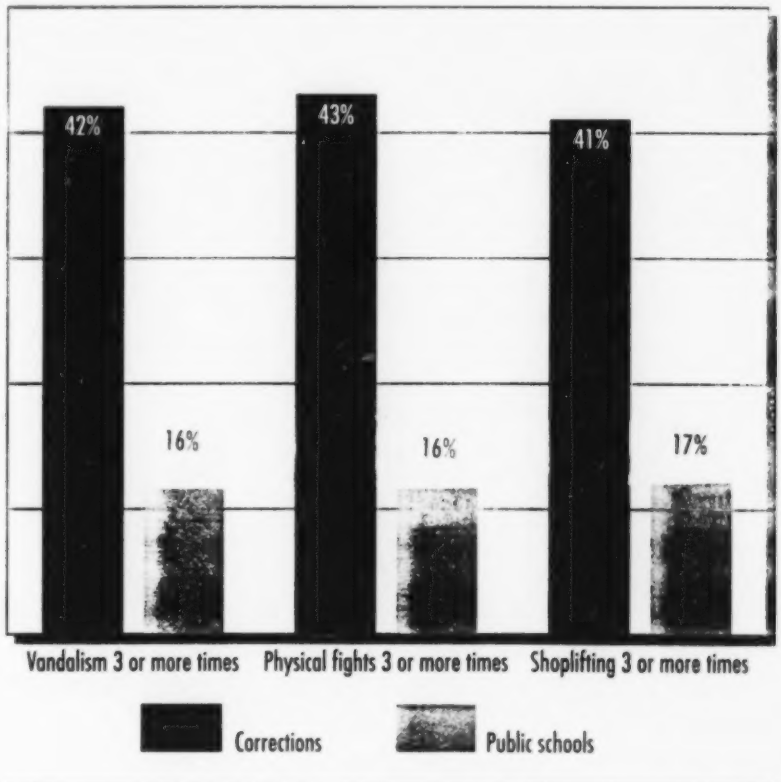
Antisocial and illegal behaviors

Delinquent behavior

Consistent with their current placement, adolescents in correctional settings were much more likely than their counterparts in public schools to report antisocial behaviors during the previous 12 months. Acts of vandalism, hitting or beating someone up, and shoplifting at least 3 times in the previous year were reported by at least 40% of the adolescents in corrections. These rates were roughly 2½ times higher than the rates for adolescents in public schools. Adolescents in corrections were also somewhat more likely than adolescents in public schools to say that they get a "kick" out of doing dangerous things (48% versus 38%).

Delinquent behaviors in past 12 months



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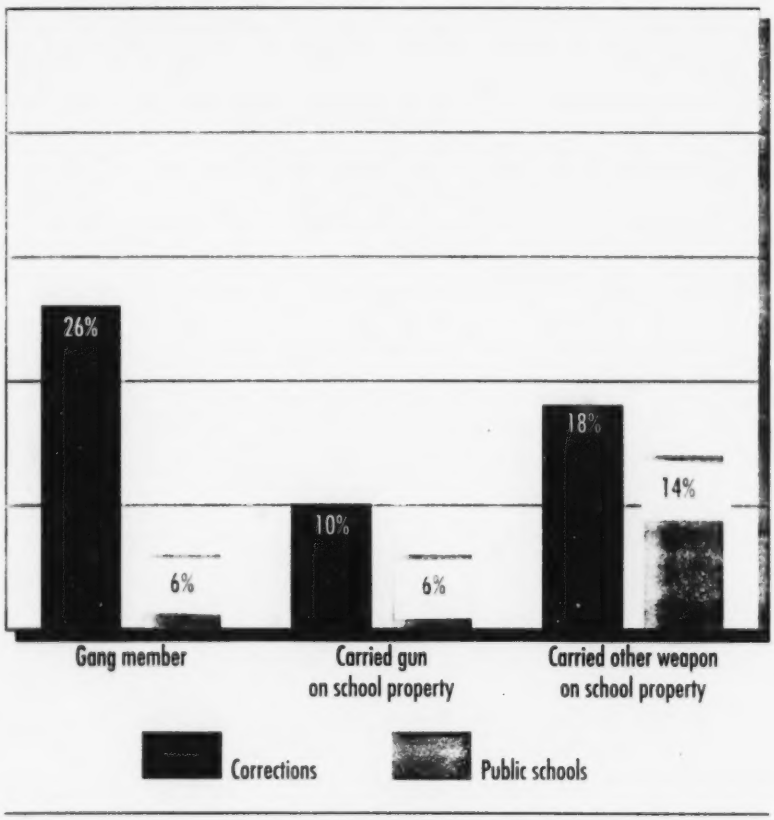
Even more dangerous behavioral indicators distinguished the two groups of adolescents. Adolescents in corrections were nearly 4½ times as likely as adolescents in public schools to report being a gang member, and more than 1½ times as likely to say that they have carried a gun on school property in the past 30 days. Males in corrections were more likely than females in corrections to be a member of a gang (28% compared with 19%), whereas females were more likely than males to have friends in a gang (56% compared with 36%).

The high rates of antisocial behavior reported by adolescents in corrections were associated with reports of parent alcohol and drug problems. Adolescents in corrections reporting high rates of antisocial behavior were also more likely than other adolescents in corrections to regularly use 3 or more drugs.

Gang membership and weapons



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Recent trends in substance use

Substance use among adolescents is of heightened interest recently because of increases in the use of cigarettes, marijuana, LSD, and other drugs reported in a variety of national studies, such as the Monitoring the Future Study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.[2] Overall, the trends in Minnesota have mirrored those reported nationally, as shown in the comparison of Minnesota Student Survey results from 1989, 1992, 1995, and 1998.[3]

Although the focus of this report is the comparison between Minnesota adolescents in corrections and those in public schools, the recent national and state trends help to provide a context for evaluating the magnitude of the differences found between these groups of young people.

The national prevalence of cigarette smoking steadily increased between 1992 and 1995 among adolescents of all ages,[2] and rates for Minnesota students followed the same pattern.[4] However, between 1995 and 1998, Minnesota smoking rates among 6th and 9th graders leveled off or decreased while rates increased among 12th graders. In fact, in 1995 and 1998, Minnesota 12th graders had a higher rate of cigarette smoking than other 12th graders across the nation.

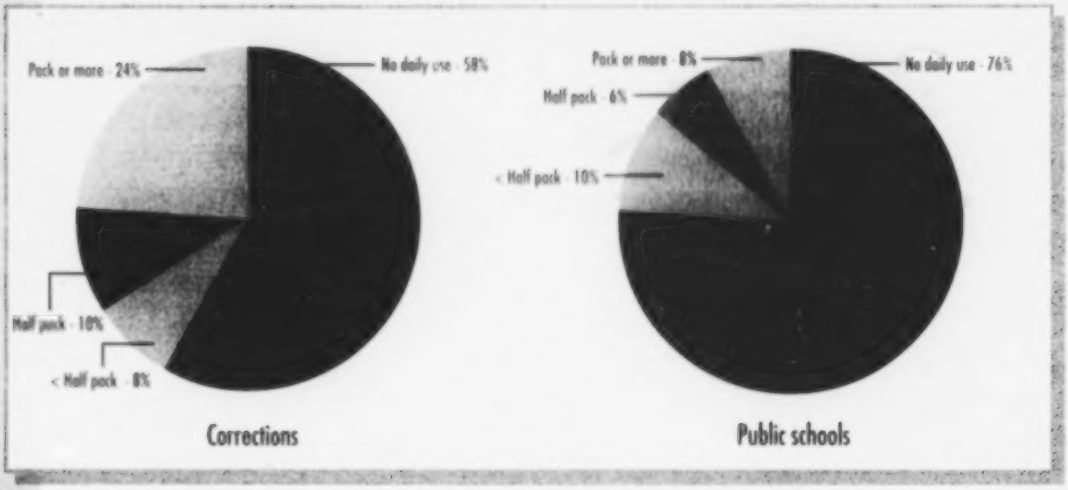
Nationally, alcohol use among adolescents declined from the 1980s through 1993 and then leveled off.[2] In Minnesota, the declines in alcohol use continued through 1995 and then leveled-off by 1998.[3] Since 1995, the rate of alcohol use among Minnesota adolescents has been lower than the national rate. Trends for marijuana use were markedly different, however. Marijuana use increased dramatically between 1992 and 1995 both nationally[3] and in Minnesota,[4] but the state rate remained lower than the national rate. National and Minnesota marijuana use rates continued to increase in 1998; however, the increases were not as dramatic.[2,3]

National surveys have also shown increases in the use of other drugs, such as LSD and cocaine since 1995.[3] Even with the recent increases, the overall prevalence rates for drugs other than marijuana remained relatively low in 1998 for both Minnesota and the nation. All drug use rates were well below peak levels seen in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Cigarette use

Adolescents in corrections were more than 1½ times more likely to smoke cigarettes on a daily basis than adolescents in public schools (42% versus 24%). The difference between the two groups of adolescents was more pronounced for heavy smoking (a pack or more a day). Adolescents in corrections were 3 times more likely to smoke heavily than adolescents in public schools.

Daily cigarette use in past 30 days


Pack or more - 24%
No daily use - 58%
Half pack - 10%
< Half pack - 8%
Corrections
Pack or more - 8%
Half pack - 6%
< Half pack - 10%
No daily use - 76%
Public schools

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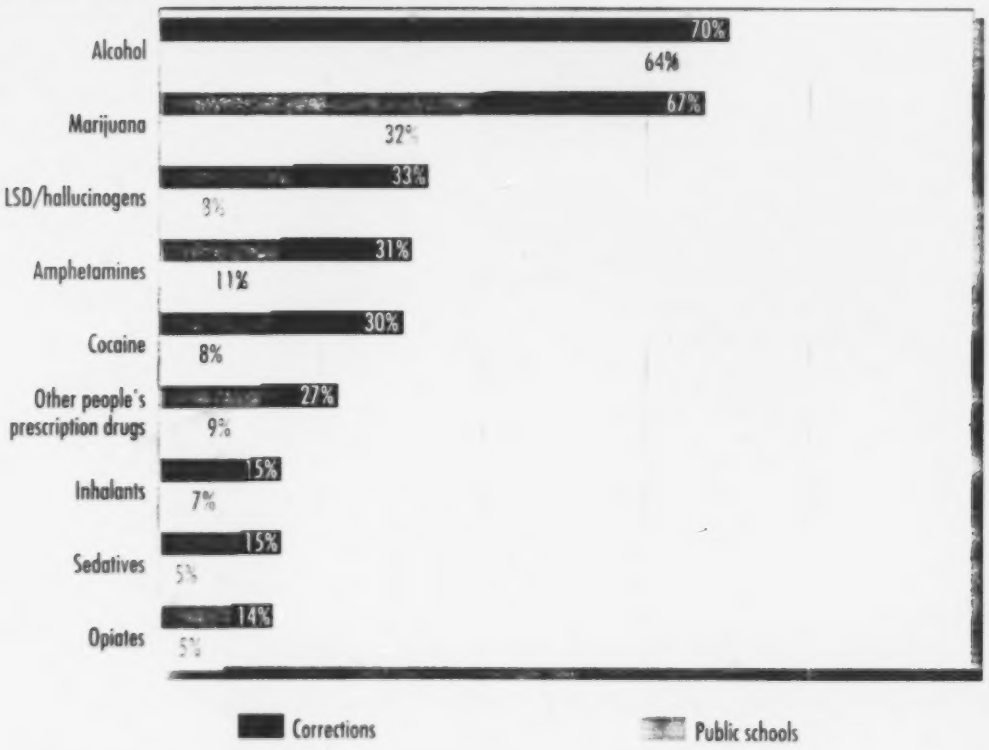
Alcohol and drug use prevalence

For each substance inquired about in the survey, adolescents in corrections were more likely than adolescents in public schools to report use. Alcohol and marijuana were the two most commonly used substances by adolescents in both groups. One-third of adolescents in corrections reported LSD or other hallucinogen use. Use of amphetamines, cocaine, and other people's prescription drugs were also fairly common among adolescents in corrections.

Examining reports of use during the previous 12 months revealed that the proportional difference between adolescents in corrections and public school students was smallest for alcohol. For all other substances, the differences in the proportions of users between the groups were much larger. Compared with adolescents in public schools, adolescents in corrections were more than 2 times as likely to use marijuana and inhalants, more than 2½ times as likely to use amphetamines and opiates, 3 times as likely to use other people's prescription drugs and sedatives, nearly 4 times as likely to use cocaine, and more than 4 times as likely to use LSD or other hallucinogens.

The higher rates of substance use prevalence reported by adolescents in corrections were associated with higher rates of other antisocial activity, severe self-esteem and emotional health problems, suicide attempts, and family alcohol and drug problems.

Substance use prevalence in past 12 months



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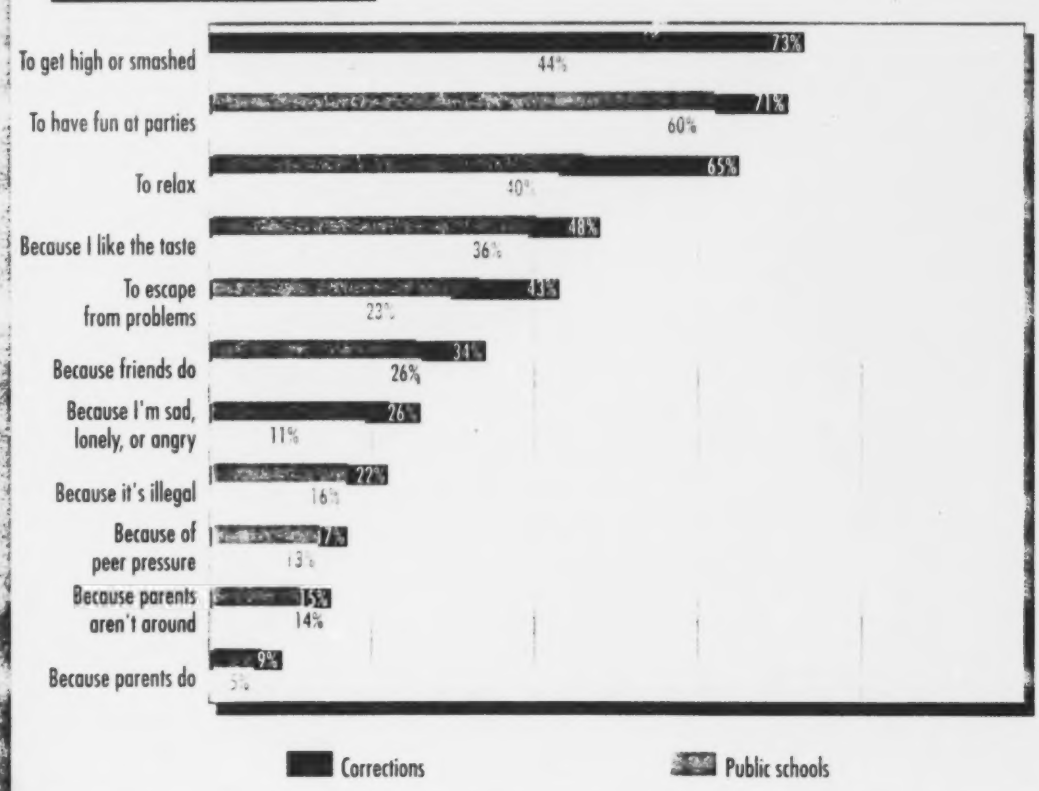
Reasons for substance use

Most reasons given by adolescents for use of alcohol or other drugs fall into three general categories: pleasure-seeking (to have fun at parties, to relax, to get high or smashed), escape-seeking (to escape from problems, because I'm sad, lonely, or angry), and peer influence (because friends do, because of peer pressure). More than seven out of ten adolescents in corrections reported using for pleasure-seeking reasons, such as to get high or smashed and to have fun at parties. Adolescents in corrections were about 2 times more likely than their public school counterparts to report use for escape-seeking reasons, particularly to use because they are sad, lonely, or angry, or to escape from problems, indicating that a higher proportion of adolescents in corrections than in public schools may be using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings.

Reasons for substance use*



* Responses reflect only students who reported substance use.

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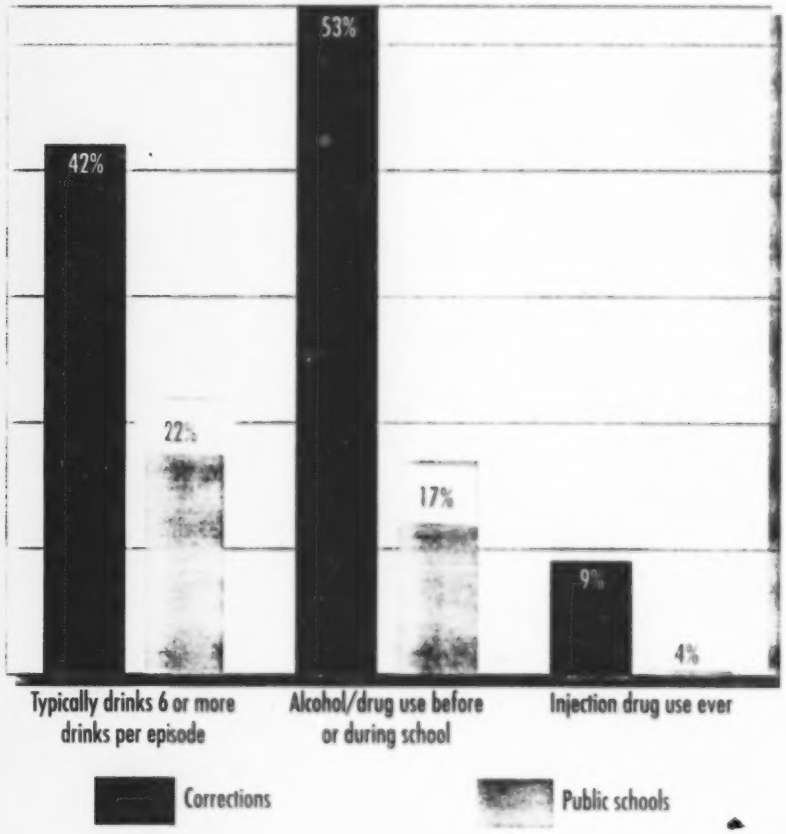
High-risk substance use

In addition to higher overall substance use, adolescents in corrections engaged in more dangerous drinking and drug use behaviors than their public school counterparts. They were nearly 2 times more likely than public school students to drink at least 6 drinks when they drank, and more than 3 times more likely than their public school counterparts to use alcohol or other drugs before or during school. Adolescents in corrections were also more than 2 times more likely to have injected drugs, a very risky behavior, especially in light of possible HIV transmission.

High-risk substance use behaviors



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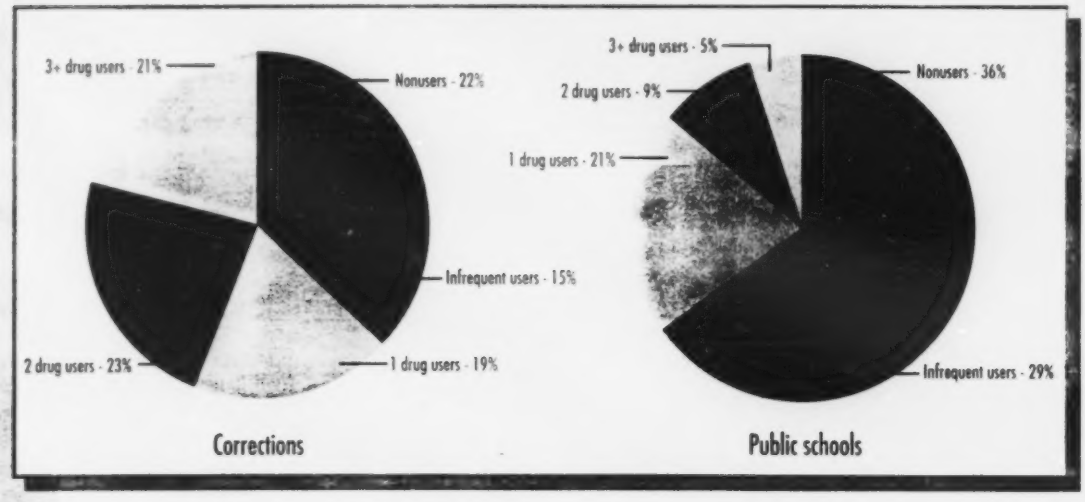
To illustrate differences in the use of multiple drugs, a hierarchy of substance use was created based on use in the past 12 months. Adolescents who had not used any substances in the past 12 months were classified as nonusers. Adolescents who did not use any drug more than 9 times were classified as infrequent users. Those who used only one substance 10 or more times were classified as 1-drug users and those who used two substances 10 or more times each were classified as 2-drug users. The most severe pattern was the use of at least three drugs 10 or more times each; adolescents with this pattern were classified as 3-or-more-drug users. Adolescents in corrections were more than 2½ times more likely than adolescents in public schools to be 2-drug users and more than 4 times more likely to be 3-or-more-drug-users.

Multiple substance use in past 12 months



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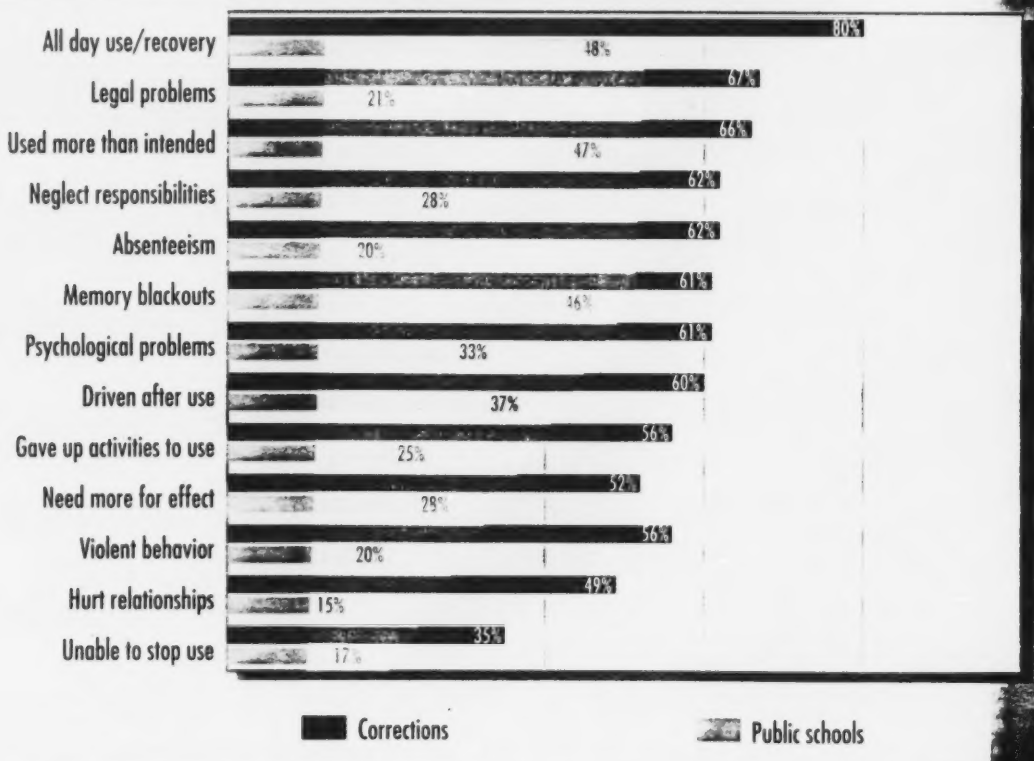
Consequences of substance use

Consistent with their higher levels of substance use, adolescents in corrections also reported many more adverse consequences of their use in the past 12 months than public school students. The average number of consequences of use reported by adolescents in corrections who used during the past year was 7.0 compared with 3.2 for the adolescents in public schools.

Eight out of ten adolescents in corrections reported using a substance all day or spending all day recovering from the effects of substance use in the past 12 months. More than two-thirds of adolescents in corrections also reported legal problems because of their use, suggesting that substance use problems may be significantly associated with juvenile offenses. In addition, six out of ten adolescents in corrections reported using more than they intended and memory blackouts, indicating impaired control over use. Compared with public school students, adolescents in corrections were more than 3 times as likely to report the following consequences of use: legal problems, hurt relationships, and absenteeism from work or school. The symptom profile among adolescents in corrections suggests that the majority of substance users in this setting may need assessments and possibly treatment for substance abuse or dependence.

Substance use consequences associated with past 12 month use*



* Responses reflect only students who reported substance use.

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Summary of findings

Juvenile corrections survey participation was just as inclusive in 1998 as in 1995 in terms of both participating facilities and number of adolescents. The high participation rate for the 1998 survey assured that the 1998 sample was reasonably representative of the juvenile corrections population as a whole.

Comparing the results of the 1998 and 1995 corrections surveys reveals very consistent results. Family composition, reports of family alcohol or drug problems, sexual activity, binge drinking, and multiple drug use were virtually unchanged. The proportion of adolescents of color increased somewhat over time. The age distribution of the population of adolescents in corrections in 1998 was about the same as in 1995. The 1998 survey sample also included a slightly higher proportion of females (19% versus 17% in 1995).

In 1998, fewer adolescents in juvenile corrections reported being a victim of sexual abuse or attempting suicide than in 1995; reports of fighting, vandalism and shoplifting were also less prevalent in 1998. Between 1995 and 1998, the prevalence of all substances except cocaine decreased for adolescents in corrections. While cocaine use also increased among adolescents in Minnesota and throughout the United States during the same time period, the decrease in other substances among adolescents in corrections is a different pattern than that seen for adolescents in the general population.[2-4]

To establish a context for evaluating the level of problems among adolescents in corrections, each 1998 corrections survey participant was matched with a public school student of the same gender and age who participated in the statewide 1998 survey. The comparisons revealed that the 1998 juvenile corrections population differed from the general student population on many dimensions:

- Correctional settings included a disproportionate number of adolescents of color and adolescents from single-parent homes.
- Adolescents in corrections were much more likely than students to have witnessed physical violence within their homes, or be victims of physical or sexual violence within or outside of their homes.
- Familial rates of alcohol and drug abuse were more than 2 times higher among adolescents in corrections than among students in public schools.
- Adolescents in corrections were much more likely than students in public schools to report psychological distress and suicide attempts.
- Adolescents in corrections were 2 times more likely than public school students to be sexually active. In juvenile corrections, more than one-quarter of females have been pregnant and a similar proportion of males have gotten a sexual partner pregnant. Despite high rates of previous pregnancies and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, many adolescents in corrections did not use condoms during recent sexual intercourse.
- High rates of antisocial acts were anticipated among adolescents in corrections. Of greater concern were the percentages of adolescents in corrections who reported being gang members and carrying a gun on school property.

- Substance abuse rates were greatly elevated among adolescents in corrections compared to their public school counterparts. They were 3 to 4 times more likely than students to use other people's prescription drugs, sedatives, cocaine, and LSD or other hallucinogens. Adolescents in corrections also reported more harmful consequences of their substance abuse such as legal problems, hurt relationships, and absenteeism from work or school.

Some survey results may run counter to common public perceptions in that they were generally positive for adolescents in corrections. With respect to self-esteem, adolescents in corrections were roughly comparable to students in public schools, and they generally gave their families high marks for caring about and understanding them. A slightly higher percentage of adolescents in corrections than students reported good communication with their mothers; however, they were much more likely to report not having a father around.

Behavior problems are obviously the catalyst for juvenile corrections placements. The survey did not address the specific actions which resulted in detention or incarceration, so it likely underestimates the true extent of differences between the corrections population and the student population in terms of violence and criminal behaviors. However, it is not merely the differences in antisocial and illegal behaviors between adolescents in corrections and public school students which are striking. What may be unexpected are the very high rates of emotional distress and self-destructive behaviors which accompany the acting out behaviors among adolescents in corrections. Moreover, many of these youth have encountered a great deal of trauma in their environments.

The profile of adolescents in corrections depicts the constellation of family and environmental risk factors, and problem behaviors or psychological distress among adolescents. Family risk factors included violence, sexual abuse, and parental substance abuse. Environmental risk factors included sexual abuse outside the home, date rape, and date violence. Adolescent problem behavior included substance abuse and other antisocial behavior, violent behavior, high-risk sexual behavior, and suicide attempts. Psychological distress included emotional distress such as depression and anxiety.

Family risk factors were often interrelated, with many adolescents reporting more than one of these risk factors. The same was true of environmental risk factors. Adolescents' risk behaviors were also associated with one another and with psychological distress, meaning that any particular behavioral or psychological problem was associated with an increased likelihood of other problems. The family and environmental risk factors were also substantially associated with the adolescent's behavioral and psychological problems.

The meaningful relationships between risk factors and adolescent problems found in the survey of the juvenile corrections population are not only consistent with earlier survey findings of adolescents in public schools,[1,5,8] they are also consistent with clinical research and other epidemiological studies. Studies have consistently implicated family factors in adolescent delinquency, substance abuse, and mental health problems.[9-12] Poor parent-child relationships, neglect, lack of warmth and affection, and inconsistent discipline have been found to be related to low self-esteem, depression, and substance abuse among

adolescents.[14,15] Parental substance abuse also has been found to be associated with increased levels of family violence in the homes of juvenile offenders.[16]

Childhood sexual abuse has been consistently found to be associated with low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, and suicide attempts[17,18] as well as with overt behavioral problems, including truancy and other school problems, delinquency, running away, prostitution, and substance abuse.[17,18,19,21] Childhood physical abuse is similarly associated with a range of negative effects including aggressive and violent behavior, low self-esteem, difficulty in establishing relationships, self-destructive behaviors, and psychiatric illness.[22,23] Witnessing family violence may have similar negative outcomes.[24] Moreover, there is evidence that some of the negative effects of abuse such as anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts may increase over time.[18]

The relationships among the variety of risk factors and problem behaviors examined in the survey of juvenile corrections are complex. For example, sexual and physical abuse can lead to repeated victimization when young people who run away from abuse at home become vulnerable to more abuse on the streets. Adolescents may use alcohol and other drugs in an attempt to alleviate the distress associated with abusive experiences, but substance abuse often worsens feelings of depression and anxiety, and is associated with suicide attempts among adolescents.[8,20,25] Sometimes substance abuse is an attempt to deal with social alienation, but substance abuse may exacerbate the problem when it further disrupts social relationships. Substance abuse can increase delinquent and criminal behavior (when adolescents steal to obtain money for drugs, for example), but often other antisocial behaviors predate the initiation of substance use.[26]

The fact that so many adolescent problems are interrelated and the reality that many are associated with family problems suggests solutions will require concerted and collaborative efforts. Many at-risk adolescents emerge from a social milieu replete with violence and despair. Individual families and society as a whole must make a renewed commitment to children. Young people need to be reared in an environment where they are protected, respected, and valued, in order that they learn to value themselves, respect their needs and the needs of others, and adopt healthy and responsible behaviors.[7] It is also important that prevention and intervention strategies consider the gender and age of their targeted population since differences in how children and adolescents respond and adapt to their environment vary by these factors.[27,28]

Previous research has identified certain aspects of interventions and treatment programs that are effective with high-risk youth. Early identification and intervention efforts have been found to significantly reduce problems and increase competencies.[29] Successful programs include comprehensive assessments which address substance abuse as well as other behavioral problems and environmental risk factors. Short-term and long-term success has been demonstrated by programs that are tailored to the individual and incorporate therapy or other strategies directed toward solving multiple problems.[30] While increasing services to adolescents in correctional facilities may be costly, it is likely that such services would pay for themselves by reducing recidivism. A decrease in future antisocial behavior has been linked to therapy that increases the adolescent's awareness of the motivations for substance abuse and delinquency and the context in which these actions occur.[31] Successful programs also must include an adequate plan for follow-up support when the adolescent returns to the community.[32]

Recommendations

The results of the Minnesota Student Survey of adolescents in corrections have implications for averting juvenile corrections placements. Clearly, earlier detection and effective interventions for children and families traumatized by physical and sexual abuse are essential. Improved access to professional assessments and services, for all families without limits imposed by financial resources, also would help to reduce the likelihood of serious behavioral problems among youth. Collaborative efforts now underway between county social service agencies, community mental health centers, and schools are an important step in this direction.

Survey results also suggest improvements to services for adolescents in the correctional system that may reduce recidivism and return youth to the community more prepared to cope with the adversities they confront. Specific recommendations include:

- Substance abuse assessment and treatment needs to be available to all juvenile offenders and become a regular part of services available for youth in correctional settings. Adequate public funds should be available for these services given the very likely reduction in future criminal activity associated with successful substance abuse treatment. Early release from corrections contingent on successful substance abuse treatment also should be explored.
- Assessments of sexual and physical abuse and psychological problems should become part of the assessment process for juvenile offenders, with mental health care available as needed.
- Assessments should be comprehensive and tailored to individual adolescents.
- Therapeutic services should involve youth in identifying the perceived benefits of gang involvement, and release plans which incorporate safer and healthier alternatives should be developed.
- Programs serving adolescents in corrections should capitalize on the high self-esteem and other assets reported by many youth. Programs could provide contacts with mentors who will spend time helping adolescents develop skills.
- Referrals for assessments of parental substance abuse problems should be available as part of the assessment of juveniles in correctional settings. Treatment for substance problems in parents of juveniles is likely to have a substantial impact on the adolescent's behavior and reduce the likelihood of the adolescent's future substance abuse and other antisocial problems.
- All services for adolescents in corrections need to be sensitive and responsive to their diverse cultural backgrounds and the different developmental needs of males and females.

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